



# SECTION THREE

CONCERTS  
CLUBS  
CLASSICAL MUSIC

## CRUCIAL CONFLICTS

Houston contraltos  
**CHAPALA-BIDES**  
Friday, Lounge Ave.  
Ticket 4

Sweden's most famous  
**GUSH**  
Wednesday, Lounge, Bottle  
Margaret 10

**CLARENCE SPACY**  
Friday & Saturday, Lounge  
Ticket 16



**ARI BROWN QUARTET**  
Saturday, Big Shop  
Ticket 20

**FLETCHER BASINCHON  
ORCHESTRA**  
Sunday afternoon, Benson & Hotel  
Ticket 38

Mexican Baroque  
**ARS MUSICA CHICAGO**  
Wednesday, Newberry Library  
Ticket 46

**GRANT PARK SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA**  
All-Beethoven program  
Friday, Sunday,  
Pershing Music Shell  
Ticket 48

**CHICAGO OPERA THEATER**  
The Jewel Box  
Mark Paskin Theatre  
Ticket 50

## EXTRAS

Spice Chicago 6  
Candy Wynn's 8  
Lounge, Chicago 13

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CHICAGO  
READER



JUNE 14, 1996

## CRUCIAL CONFLICT "Hay, Ride"



### Hip-hop Heroes

A west-side hip-hop foursome with a slapdash "wild west" aesthetic is the first local rap group with a bona fide national hit. Since its April 23 release, Crucial Conflict's "Hay," a jaunty celebration of marijuana smoking set to a languid, shuffling groove, has climbed to number 2 on *Billboard's* rap chart, number 15 on the R & B chart, and number 38 on the pop chart—with little sign of slowing.

The group—Wild Style, Kilo, Coldhard, and Never—formed early in 1994 and developed under the tutelage of Terrell Harris (aka Shorty Capone, doing business as Raw Dope Productions), who helped formulate, sharpen, and package their sound and image. The slightly goofy rodeo theme that surfaces in their bronco-riding dance style and modified overalls, not to mention their music and lyrics, was inspired by a road trip to Los Angeles that took them through the southwest. The forthcoming debut album, *The Final Tie*—set for a July 2 release—opens with a frenzied Indian war whoop, while "Ride the Rodeo," the next single, features the chorus "Hoochie coochie everything / It's all hi-de-ho / Sit in the park / Drink forty / Rodeo," as guest diva Toi entreats them to "giddyap." Elsewhere is the sound of galloping horses, gunshots, crackling whips, and twangy guitar samples. The hit video for "Hay," shot in the group's run-down west-side hangout known as "the barn," features a pistol-slinging cameo from local blues fixture the "Lone Ranger."

According to Harris, "Everyone [here] has tried to be like other hip-hop groups, which makes Chicago behind everyone else.

We had to come up with a real Chicago flavor, but since there wasn't one before we had to create one.

Columbia concurs: "If you don't have a style that stands out, no one's gonna care."

"We put a lot of work into our sound, developing the right chemistry and the right vibe, and now it's just coming back to us," says Wild Style. Also serving as producer, he's managed to craft a fairly

distinctive sound, although it's not as unique as Harris may believe. "Our music is unorthodox. When I produce a track I think about the vibe we'll get off it. We all have different [rapping] styles, but they all have to fit that vibe. Other rappers don't know how to deal with it."

The group's rapid-fire staccato rapping mirrors the mind-boggling precision and mild gangster stance practiced by Cleveland's Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, whose single "The Crossroads" has topped the pop singles chart for four weeks. Elsewhere a tune like "Just Getting My Money" wily mimics the sleepy, singsongy G-funk of LA's Warren G. While Crucial Conflict draws upon extremely familiar sources for some of its samples—such as Funkadelic and Curtis Mayfield—Wild Style has delivered a bracingly original array of rhythm programs. Slurds of jungle, Miami bass, and house punctuate the group's loose, sleepy musical scapes. Whereas most traditional hip-hop is built from breakbeats, Crucial Conflict's drum programming is considerably more complex, revealing an unusual rhythmic sophistication.

Amid fierce bidding Crucial Conflict

signed with Pallas Records—a recently revamped New York label distributed by Universal, now run by Roy Cormier and Fab 5 Freddy. A ceaseless entrepreneur best known for his work on *Yo! MTV Raps*, Freddy has also directed Crucial Conflict's videos. Taking a break from shooting the video for "Ride the Rodeo" at Halsted Studios deep on the south side, he says, "When we started the label we didn't want to deal with New York artists. One guy thinks he can rhyme and then he expects a big record deal. Crucial Conflict have a complete sound and an image." Indeed, while shopping for a deal the group was making a finished album.

WGGI music director/assistant program director Don E. Cologne insists that success in the music industry is 95 percent business and 5 percent talent. "This group has the right product at the right time," says Cologne. "They're covering their bases because ['Hay'] has got a little bit of everything in it. There is no distinctive Chicago sound... Imaging is very important too. It's all part of the business. You'll start seeing those farmer jeans coming back now. Look at Kriss

Kross. People actually started wearing their clothes backwards and didn't even think about how stupid they looked."

Despite poor chart showings, Chicago does have a vibrant hip-hop scene. Without a hit Common Sense has earned a hard-core following, and his recent inclusion in New York's Native Tongues posse—De La Soul, A Tribe Called Quest—seems to assure that his next album will enjoy greater sales. "Po Pimp," a single on the local Creators Way label by west-siders Do or Die, has blown up locally, and was just picked up by the powerful indie label Rap-a-Lot. Last year's impressive *Talent Fest* compilation featured work by important up-and-comers like Rubber Room and Stony Island.

Cologne blames the city's hip-hop scene itself for failing to make a national impact. "There's no unity. [The groups] compete against each other. There's got to be a tighter vibe, and if there was you'd see more interest put on Chicago."

Wild Style says, "People weren't accepting Chicago hip-hop because they thought all we had was house music. They didn't take our rap seriously."

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